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# FABIAN ELECTION MANIFESTO 1892

PRICE ONE PENNY.

TO BE OBTAINED OF THE FABIAN SOCIETY, 276 STRAND, W.C.

*June 1892.*





# The Fabian Election Manifesto.

1892.

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In a few weeks—perhaps in a few days—from the publication of this Manifesto, there will be a General Election, the result of which will depend on the votes of the Working Classes; and yet the Working Classes will have no political party of their own to vote for. They will be invited to choose between the Conservatives, led by Lord Salisbury, and the Liberals, led by Mr. Gladstone.

## What the Conservatives have done.

The Conservative party is avowedly the party of privilege and monopoly. It has been in power for the last six years; and during that period it has suppressed popular rights in Ireland, and attacked them in England, using the armed forces at its disposal against the rights of Free Speech and Public Meeting as willingly in Trafalgar Square as at Mitchelstown, whenever the interests of the landlords were at stake. In the numerous disputes between Capital and Labor during its period of office, it has sanctioned State interference only when the blackleg needed protection against the Trade Unionist. Although the administration of the criminal law has been biassed against the poor to a scandalous degree, the Government has only interfered to show extra favor to the rich. The infamous Game Laws have been mercilessly enforced; Labor leaders of unimpeachable, personal character have been charged with intimidation and imprisoned; several working men and two working women have been arrested for exercising the right of Free Speech in London; no redress has been given in cases where the Government, in spite of the most vindictive efforts to blacken the characters of its victims, has been compelled by public indignation to beat a retreat; and ferocious sentences of penal servitude have been dealt out to poor offenders for trifling thefts, whilst rich criminals, convicted of robbery and manslaughter committed under circumstances which placed them beyond all excuse, have been treated with conspicuous humanity. All attempts to deal with the Land Question have had for their object the strengthening of the land monopoly by the creation of a host of petty landlords; there has been no extension of the Franchise or alteration of those Registration clauses which deprive one-third of our workers of the votes to which they are entitled under the Reform Act of 1884; the Local Government Act was drawn so as to prevent the agricultural laborers from exercising any real control over the County Councils; the County Franchise was withheld from the lodgers, who have voted in parliamentary elections since 1867;

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the County Council of London, the capital city of England and the world, was denied an ordinary municipal borough's powers of local self-government, lest the monopoly of the ground landlords, which costs the Working Classes £16,000,000 a year, should be interfered with; and the privileges of the Church and the House of Lords, the Septennial Act, the denial of payment to Members of Parliament, which, with the system of throwing all election expenses on the private means of candidates, excludes poor men from the House of Commons, have all been maintained by the Government. Clearly a party of which this can be said, is no friend to the Working Classes.

### What the Liberals have done.

But when we turn to the Liberals, we find that though they have had the great advantage of being in opposition, and therefore of being able to proclaim much more advanced Radical views than they would have ventured upon when in office and liable to be called upon to make good their words by legislation, they have repeatedly shewn themselves to be at bottom no more on the side of the Working Classes than their opponents. They have made the most desperate efforts to stifle English questions by an agitation about Irish grievances, the insincerity of which was sufficiently proved by the fact that when the Government tried its Mitchelstown tactics at Trafalgar Square in 1887, the Liberal party practically abandoned the London working men to their fate, and Mr. Gladstone actually complimented "our excellent police." In the slums of English towns in 1886, distress was as acute, and evictions for non-payment of rent as frequent and as cruel as in Ireland; but the official Liberals persistently ignored the condition of the English workers, from whose labor their own rents and dividends were drawn, and clamored solely about the exactions of Lord Clanricarde, who was doing no more in Ireland than landlords do in England with the full support of the Liberal party. The opposition of the Liberals to the Irish Land Purchase scheme was purely factious, since, far from wishing to prevent the land from slipping away from the Irish nation into the hands of the farmers, they had actually tried to pass a similar Land Purchase Bill themselves during their last term of office. When at last the vigorous agitation of the Socialists and Radicals forced them to add some Working Class measures to their program (which was, in 1887, actually less advanced than the Conservative program),\* they refused to adopt the vitally important measure of Payment of Members, and then, when they were again forced forward, prevaricated grossly on the subject by declaring that they "recognized the principle" of such payment. Under the pretext of remedying the grievances of London leaseholders, they supported the Leaseholds Enfranchisement Bill, a fraudulent measure which would not have benefited any leaseholder with a shorter tenure than twenty years, and the result of which would be to turn the richer leaseholders into

\* See Fabian Tract, No. 11, "The Workers' Political Programme."

ground landlords, and so strengthen the voting power which supports the odious monopoly of land in London. Of late, in spite of the approach of the General Election, the Liberals have fallen so far out of touch with the Working Class that they have gone from bad to worse in the House of Commons. Their servility to Mr. Gladstone, whose opinions on every other question than that of Home Rule are those of an exceptionally prejudiced Tory, is probably more affected than real, and is only due to the fact that his personal popularity is the sole asset in their political bankruptcy. But their recent failure to rally as a party against the Septennial Act, when Sir W. Foster's Resolution offered them the opportunity, or in favor of Payment of Members on Mr. Fenwick's motion; above all, their treacherous desertion, at Mr. Gladstone's bidding, of the station master who was dismissed by the directors of the North Cambrian Railway for giving evidence before the Labor Commission: these public acts must have convinced every politically active working man who is not a mere fanatical Gladstonian, that the Liberals who are now begging for his vote are no more representatives of the Labor interest than the Conservatives who are bidding against them.

### The Conspiracy of Hypocrisy.

In both parties alike, the conspiracy of silence on the fundamental question of how to alter our outrageously unjust system of distributing the wealth of the country, has remained unbroken. During the present Government's term of office, there have been constant complaints as to the extravagance of public expenditure. We have had clamour in the name of the ratepayers against spending the paltriest sums on pianofortes for Board Schools, and in the name of the taxpayers against every new ironclad. Meanwhile, nearly three thousand million pounds sterling have been wasted on the propertied classes in rent and in that particular form of interest which costs its recipient no more labor than the cashing of a dividend warrant or the cutting off of a coupon. Out of this legalized plunder probably a thousand millions has been capitalized by the "abstinence" of the plunderers so as to increase the tax on future labor: the rest has been squandered in the endowment of idleness. Yet both Liberals and Conservatives agree that whatever other expenditure we can retrench in or dispense with, this endowment must be left untouched. They are willing to economise in the army, the navy, the schools, the housing of the poor, sanitation, smoke prevention, river embankments, harbors, in anything and everything that is of national importance, sooner than touch one penny of the unearned incomes of the idle rich, or even take the simplest step to forestall their increase. Every budget is drawn up on the principle that all devices for screwing the revenue out of the poor must be exhausted before the idle rich are touched. The country postman has to walk excessive distances for miserable wages in order that the profit on the Post Office may be filched from the employees and from the public by the Chancellor of the Exchequer



in order to keep down the Income Tax ; and with the same object taxes on the food of the people are maintained in defiance of every sound canon of political economy and common sense. Ministers are ready to moralize on every subject but this authorised spoliation of the industrious by the idle ; to point out every social evil except this root of all the social evils ; to insist on every reform except its reform. Whenever they allude to it, they imply that it does not exist ; that the class which lives on rent and dividends, and spends them in the manner revealed by the Tranby Croft gambling case, is an industrious and deserving class ; that the poor are poor because of their improvidence and vice ; and that all assertions to the contrary are direct incitements to Anarchy. During the recent trial of Ravachol in Paris, the Press advertised the exploits and spread the arguments of the assassin and dynamiter throughout Europe without an attempt to controvert them, because it would have been impossible to do so without calling attention to the social injustices which he made the excuse for his crimes.

## The Policy of the Working Class.

Yet throughout this huge conspiracy of Silence, or rather of Hypocrisy, it is perfectly well known on both sides that the Working Classes have only one possible program, which may be summed up as the Disestablishment and Disendowment of Idleness. They have left Utopian Socialism and Sentimental Republicanism far behind them ; and though the belated literary-man-turned-politician of the middle class imagines that the Labor agitator is still a dreamer of dreams, the agitators and their audiences have never been more out of patience with both dreams and party shibboleths than at present. Their objects and methods are plain to all except those who have not the wit, or perhaps the will, to see them. They intend to bring the representative governing bodies, local as well as parliamentary, under genuine popular control by Payment of all Members and Election Expenses, Second Ballot, and more frequent elections. The powers thus obtained will be used to relieve the land and industry of the country from the control of idlers by gradually transferring it to local governing bodies under all the usual forms of sale-and-purchase or compensation, the final act of expropriation at each step being the raising of the purchase money or compensation by deliberate taxation of those unearned incomes which at present amount, as the Income Tax returns shew, to the monstrous sum of Five Hundred Million pounds sterling a year. This program of Municipal Socialism and Radical Finance is the only one upon which a Labor Party can be organized ; and the common pretence that the friends of Labor are not Socialists, and that their financial schemes go no further than the old Whig cry for the conversion of indirect into direct taxation, is only part of the Conspiracy of Hypocrisy. If the Working Classes spend much less time than they used to in attacking the open venality of the Established Church, or the detested hereditary privileges of the House of Lords and the Crown,



it is because they have learned from the experience of the United States, where these abuses do not exist, that the true masters of a nation are not the Kings, Peers, and Bishops, but those who own its land and capital and control its industrial organization. The battle is now pitched between the present owners and the workers, who are bent on wresting their privileges from them. How, then, can the Working Classes be represented by a House of Commons consisting of men who could not afford to sit there if they were not landlords, capitalists, or, at best, professional men depending for their means and position on the patronage of landlords and capitalists? Naturally, the moment a Bill or Resolution in Parliament raises the vital issue of Property *versus* Labor, the members rally overwhelmingly in defence of Property, whether they are Conservatives, Tory Democrats, Whigs, "New Liberals," or Philosophic Radicals. When the workers asked, a few months ago, that a little more of the wealth of London should be spent on the Board Schools and a little less on the ground landlords, Mr. Labouchere the Republican rushed at once to the side of the Duke of Westminster; and Mr. Balfour has no stauncher ally than Mr. John Morley in his opposition to the enforcement by the State of an eight hours limit to the working day.

### The Tyranny of our Party System.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that we hear from all quarters a demand for a new party devoted singly to the interests of Labor. Unfortunately, the difficulties which hamper the beginnings of a third political party in England can only be appreciated by those who have learnt them from practical electioneering experience. By our method of deciding parliamentary elections, the seat is given to the candidate who obtains the highest number of votes at the first ballot, although double as many may be divided among his competitors; so that the majority in the House of Commons may easily represent a minority of the nation. It therefore becomes of the utmost consequence to the majority in any constituency that its vote should not be "split": that is, divided between two or more rival candidates on the same side. Consequently, if a third candidate comes forward in a one-member constituency he is at once accused of a treacherous design to split the vote in the interests of the party which he professes to oppose; and he is boycotted at the polls by all who are sufficiently experienced and disciplined in politics to understand that nothing but a solid party vote can win a closely contested election. This state of things, whilst it is fatal to Independent candidates, suits the two established political parties so well that they both, when in office, ignore the demand of the advanced sections for the introduction of the Continental system of Second Ballot, which secures the final victory at the polls to the majority, whether the vote has been split at the first ballot or not. Pending the introduction of this reform, the tyranny of our party system is complete. This was strikingly shewn at the recent elections for the London County Council, where the

necessity for presenting a united front to the enemy compelled the voters to boycott all the Independent candidates without regard to their programs or past services.

The practical conclusion is that until we get Second Ballot all candidates who are not the nominees of an organized party may be left out of account; and it is waste of time and of votes to put them forward except when the object is, not to win the seat, but either to advertise their opinions or to defeat some other candidate by splitting the vote of his side. When a candidate is run to win, he must come forward either as the nominee of one of the two established parties, or as the nominee of a new and advanced party which has made sufficient headway in the constituency to have disestablished and taken the place of the Liberal party in local politics.

### Political Apathy of the Workers.

At present there are unfortunately very few constituencies in which the Working Classes are politically organized enough to take the overwhelming lead in politics which their superiority in numbers has placed within their reach. In Battersea the Working Classes, led by John Burns, have extinguished all opposition; but this striking success unfortunately proves nothing, since the chief factor in it was the exceptional ability of the candidate, whose name was made known throughout the world by the dock strike of 1889. So long as the Working Classes need an extraordinary candidate, popularized by an extraordinary event, to rouse them to do what the rich classes will do as a matter of course for an ordinary candidate without any rousing at all, so long will successful political organization of the Working Classes be confined to one constituency in every hundred; and so long, too, will their representatives be hopelessly outvoted by the representatives of the rich on every governing body in the country.

### Forcing the Hand of the Liberals.

For the present therefore, advanced politicians are mostly driven to depend, not on the support of separate organizations devoted to the interests of Labor alone, but on their chances of forcing the Liberal Associations to accept strong Radicals and Socialists as their party candidates. There is of course no difficulty in doing this in constituencies in which the Liberals have no chance of beating the Conservatives. The Liberal party, loud in its professions that Labor should be represented by a due proportion of working men in Parliament (say 10 out of 670), now takes care at every election to offer a certain number of safe Tory seats to Labor Candidates. At this election, for instance, the utmost the Liberals can hope for is to be as successful as they were in 1885; and it will accordingly be found that all the new Labor candidates who are wholly dependent on official support from

the Liberal party, are contesting seats which were won by the Conservatives in 1885, and will therefore, in all probability, be won by them again in 1892. But notwithstanding that the friendliness of the Liberals in such cases is an obvious sham, the opportunities it provides are not to be despised, because there are many constituencies in which the Working Classes, though they will vote for a Conservative against a Liberal, will vote for a good Labor candidate against a Conservative if they get the chance. Therefore, however clear it may be to a Labor candidate, when the Liberals offer him a constituency to contest, that they have selected it for him because they do not believe he can possibly win it, he should take the offer if he can find no better opening, and try whether he cannot beat the Conservative by throwing over mere Liberalism and trying conclusions with him on a thoroughgoing Labor program.

In cases where the Liberals stand to win at the election, it will be found that the difficulty of forcing them to adopt advanced candidates will be great in proportion to the certainty of the Conservatives being defeated. The Labor section must therefore threaten that if too backward a candidate is accepted, the Working Classes will either abstain from voting in disgust or else split their vote between the Liberal and some Independent Labor candidate, with the result, both ways, of letting the Conservative win the seat. But this threat can only be brought home by the Socialists and Radicals themselves joining the Liberal Associations and getting their best men elected to the executive committees. Any earnest politician can do this, as a rule, by merely signifying his willingness to serve, since the extreme scarcity of recruits for active service ensures a welcome to all. This scarcity is one of the most discouraging features of political life. The utmost that can be done with the great mass of Englishmen at present is to induce some two thirds of them to claim and use their votes. Not more than fifty in a constituency will take the trouble to attend a ward meeting of the local political association once or twice a year; and as for the handful of men who, as members of the executive committee, form the real caucus, capable candidates for it are always at a premium. The immense effect which the Socialists, though they are a mere stage army, have been able to produce in politics, can only be understood by those who are behind the scenes sufficiently to know that all political bodies in England are stage armies too, and that the Socialists far outstrip the caucuses in activity, in initiative, in personal devotion, and consequently in the circulation of propagandist literature and the regular maintenance of public free meetings for the statement and discussion of political principles. The result is that the only systematic political education within the reach of young working men and women is a socialistic education.

## How the Liberals Checkmate the Labor Men.

It might seem from the foregoing that the swamping of the backward or Whig element in the caucuses by an influx of Socialists



and Radicals ought to be the easiest thing in the world. Nevertheless, the moment it is carried beyond a certain point, it is effectively checked by the bankruptcy of the swamped caucus. Political operations cost money; and whereas there is always sufficient to be had from a few rich Liberal subscribers in the district or from headquarters as long as the caucus jogs along quietly in the old Liberal rut, the moment it moves too fast the supplies are cut off; and the Working Class cannot be depended on to make up the deficiency. In a swamped caucus the whole question is how far the majority of Socialists and Radicals can push the minority of Whigs who hold the purse strings. When the all-important moment comes for selecting the party candidate, the Whigs, backed by the official leaders of the Liberal party, try to get a Whig accepted; whilst the Radicals try to get a Socialist. Usually neither one side nor the other has its way completely. The Whigs have to put up with a candidate too advanced for their liking; and the Radicals have to be content with one who is not advanced enough. Such a result is not much to boast of; but it is the best that can be achieved by the friends of Labor where there is no organized Labor party strong enough to drive the caucuses out of the field. And even this, if it is to be done at all, must be done before the candidate is selected, and not left until election time. However weak an accepted party candidate may be, any proposal to change him for a better one on the eve of an election is almost certain to be rejected, even by men of advanced opinions, with a remark as to the folly of swapping horses when crossing a stream. All Radicals and Socialists are therefore urgently reminded that if they have not already done their utmost to secure the selection of advanced candidates or to compel bad ones to withdraw and make room for better, there is not a moment to be lost. Indeed it is too late now to interfere in cases where the party arrangements are already completed on even a moderately satisfactory Radical basis. But something may still be done in cases where no candidate has yet been found, or where the caucus has selected one who is, from the Working Class point of view, every whit as bad as his opponent.

## Need for an Independent Labor Party.

It will now be seen that the process of swamping the Liberal Associations with Socialists and Radicals, though it can, when adroitly managed, considerably quicken the pace of political reform, is yet but a paltry substitute for the straightforward action of a genuine Working Class party, supported by Working Class subscriptions and completely independent of both Liberal and Conservative aid. The fact that no such party exists is disgraceful to the Working Classes. A subscription of only three half-pence a year from every male worker in the kingdom would bring in a parliamentary fund of £50,000 a year. If the wage workers of both sexes and of all ages subscribed one penny a year each, the result would be an annual fund of nearly £60,000. If we confine ourselves to that section of the

Working Class which has been organized and brought under discipline by Trade Unions, taking no account of what is called the New Unionism, and counting only those comparatively stable Societies which held their own through the bad times which preceded the revival of trade at the end of 1887, we find that the members could have maintained a parliamentary fund of £130,000 a year by paying a penny a week per member. The bricklayers, who have just decided to vote £3 a week from the funds of their Trade Union to maintain their representative in the London County Council, might do as much for a delegate of their own in the House of Commons; and the four Unions of Railway Workers could at least support one member in Parliament, even if they had to do it by a special levy. The poverty of the workers is therefore no excuse for their slavish political apathy. They make greater sacrifices to support legions of publicans and sporting bookmakers than free political institutions would cost them; and there is no escaping the inference that they care more for drinking and gambling than for freedom. The same workman who pleads want of education and opportunity as an excuse for not understanding party politics is at no loss when the subject is football, or racing, or pigeon-flying, or any subject, however complicated, that he really wants to understand. Under such circumstances it is useless to discuss what a Labor party might do at the election now upon us. There is no Labor party; and there is no possibility of forming one in time for the dissolution. It is true that in every constituency plenty of men will applaud any orator who advocates a Labor party. But the Labor candidate who depends on them for his election expenses or for two pounds a week to support him whilst he is working for them on the County Council or in Parliament, soon finds that it is one thing to make people shout and another to make them pay. As for Labor Associations sufficiently numerous and powerful to make the voters feel that all Progressive votes not given to the Labor candidate would be wasted, there are not a dozen such bodies in England, even if we include the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, the representatives of which usually vote as the Liberal whips direct on all occasions in Parliament except when the regulation of factories and mines, or the liability of employers for accidents to their employees, come up for settlement. It cannot be too emphatically repeated here that the exceptional cases of the organization of the Working Class vote in Battersea by John Burns, and in Northampton by the late Charles Bradlaugh, only prove what can be done under special circumstances. The test of the political capacity of a class is shewn by its power to make the most of ordinary circumstances; and under ordinary circumstances the Working Class does nothing at all, whereas the upper and middle classes organize their forces and put forward and support their candidates just as regularly in the most obscure constituencies as they do in Midlothian, where they have Mr. Gladstone to rouse them to enthusiasm. It is easy to account for this state of things by pointing out that the poverty and drudgery in which the workers are plunged leaves them no

means and no energy to spare for political work. But to account for facts is not to alter them; and poverty or no poverty, drudgery or no drudgery, the workers must make up their minds that no power on earth can make free men and women of people who will not spend a shilling a year on their political business. During the present year the workers of London suffered themselves to be shamefully defeated at the School Board election because not more than one in four of them would take the pains to walk to the polling station on a rainy evening. Gentlemen who had openly sneered at the children of the working classes as "gutter children" were returned at the top of the poll in constituencies where excellent Labor candidates were defeated; and the Board Schools of the capital will consequently remain for the next two years in the hands of the party which, under cover of sparing the rates, ran in the interests of the ground landlords as against those of the children. Later on, the defeat was supposed to be redeemed by a great triumph for the Working Classes at the County Council Election. The Fabian Society admittedly contributed largely to that success by collecting all the facts and figures relating to the great London monopolies, and printing and distributing over 500,000 leaflets, besides organizing and delivering several courses of lectures in all parts of London before the election. But the Working Classes did not pay for the leaflets or for the lectures. Everything had to be "free," which means that the 470 members of the London Fabian Society had to find the time and money; and the Society would be hopelessly bankrupt at this moment in consequence but for the liberality of a few comparatively rich friends who came to the rescue. The same story can be told by the other bodies, Socialist and Radical, which helped to organize the victory. The ordinary working man seemed to take it quite as a matter of course that all this trouble and expense should be incurred for his sake by somebody else, and to feel that he had shewn sufficient public spirit in listening to the canvasser's instructions instead of turning him out of the house as an intruder. In the face of these facts the Fabian Society, though convinced of the need of a new political party devoted solely to the interests of the Working Class, would be trifling with the public if it pretended that there was any such thing yet in existence as a Labor Party, or that the present movement of popular feeling in that direction is worth sufficient pounds, shillings, pence and votes, to run twenty genuine Labor candidates without middle-class support successfully at the forthcoming election.

### Test Questions Impracticable.

In short, then, since the election must be fought without a general organization, or a general fund, or the guidance of official leaders, it must also be fought without general orders. It is not desirable that any item in the Labor program should be made a test question at the poll. All that can be said is that the most immediately important measure is a Reform Bill providing for Payment of all Members and Election Expenses out of public funds,



Second Ballot, and Shorter Parliaments. As a rule, a candidate who has not got as far as this is not worth the trouble of voting for by a working man, except to keep a worse candidate out. Yet if a conscientious candidate, sound on all other points, objected, and were opposed by a candidate who was sound on that point alone, it would be absurd to give the latter the preference. Now if Payment of Members cannot be made a test question, nothing can. It has been suggested that two or three questions should be grouped together as a Minimum Program, and that no candidate be supported who will not pledge himself to it. But no program of the kind can be devised for the whole country. A minimum that would be too much for a backward constituency would be too little for an advanced one. The political situation is not the same in any two electoral divisions; and the friends of Labor in each place can only make the most of the local situation, whatever it is. Besides, there is the general objection to minimum programs that they tend to become maximum ones. The minimum, though put forward as the least that the Working Class voter will put up with, is taken as being the most he ventures to expect. Another objection to a minimum program is that in cases where neither of the candidates will accept it, it gives working men an excuse for not voting at all, which is almost always the very worst course they can take. It is easy to say that neither candidate is worth voting for; but those who are fondest of saying this should be the first to admit that there is generally a candidate that is worth voting against.

## Candidates' Pledges and their Value.

Since there will be but few Labor candidates at the General Election, and since, in their absence, working men cannot be recommended to abstain from voting, it will be necessary in most cases to vote for the better of the two party candidates put into the field by the followers of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury. In exacting pledges from these candidates, it must be borne in mind that such pledges are of little practical value, because it is only the Cabinet which has any real power to introduce and pass Bills in the House of Commons. A candidate may therefore pledge himself to support all sorts of extreme reforms with the full certainty that not one of them will come before the House until it is taken up by the Government. Therefore to vote for the candidate who gives the most and the readiest pledges would put a premium on mere unscrupulousness, since there is nothing to prevent a dishonest candidate from promising anything and everything that will win votes for him. All party candidates must therefore be judged by their personal characters and past records; and those who have nothing to offer but pledges should be sharply reminded that the only pledges worth having are the pledges of their official leaders, who will constitute the Cabinet if their party gains a majority. It is customary before every General Election for the chief of each party, by a speech or a published letter to one of his colleagues, to make a statement of the measures he

intends to introduce if the country declares in his favour; and this statement constitutes the real program of his party. Their other programs, including those of the National Liberal Federation and the National Union of Conservative Associations, are worthless. The Liberal program at the next election, for instance, will not be the Newcastle program, but only just so much of it as Mr. Gladstone can be forced to promise explicitly to carry out by the Working Classes threatening to vote against him, or to run Labor candidates in defiance of the danger of splitting the vote. Such threats must be addressed throughout the country to the different candidates, who, when they find that their own pledges are unavailing, will transfer pressure to head-quarters. Nevertheless it is necessary to insist on the candidates pledging themselves as well; and such pledges should be obtained by sending in a series of questions on the Labor program to the candidate, and asking for a written reply. If any candidate seeks to evade the questions by declarations of unbounded devotion to the Throne and Constitution on the one hand, or to his Grand Old Leader on the other, it will generally prove wise to vote for his opponent.

## Qualifications of Labor Candidates.

Labor candidates should be run in all cases where there is (1) a chance of winning the seat; or (2) some reasonable likelihood of the Labor poll proving large enough to make the Labor cause respected in the constituency, in which case there should be no hesitation about splitting the vote; or (3) where the Liberal and Conservative candidates are equally backward on Labor questions, and the result of the ordinary party contest is therefore quite indifferent to the Working Class. But all these three cases are subject to the condition that the Labor candidate shall be a man of unquestionable honesty, so that the cause of Labor may never be discredited by him, and a man of fair capacity, so that he may never make it ridiculous. A Conservative or Liberal candidate need not be a person of any particular ability. If he holds his tongue and obeys the party whip, he cannot damage himself or his side. But every Labor member in the next parliament, and every Labor candidate on the platform at the election, will have frequently to act on his own judgment; and any mistake he makes will be pounced upon as a proof of the inferiority of Labor members in general. Beyond the two indispensable points of honesty and ability, it is not possible to lay down any set of qualifications as necessary for Labor candidates. But it is certainly desirable that such candidates should be members of the vast class of men and women who work for weekly wages. All ordinary men vote with their own class; and though it is true that there are members of the middle and upper classes whose devotion to the cause of the people is beyond all question, yet they are exceptions to the rule; and it is only by exception that they should be selected as candidates. If the working class shew any preference for middle class men, they will soon find their parliamentary forces swamped

by ambitious young lawyers and journalists who have no other way of compelling the political parties to recognize their talents than by making themselves famous on the Radical, Republican, or Socialist platform. The late Lord Beaconsfield began his career in this fashion, which is the only one open to men who have political talent without social influence. It is unnecessary to name living examples, as no observant citizen will be at any loss to point out gentlemen of Cabinet rank in Parliament who first made a noise in the world by professing extreme views to which they never now allude. A really able professional man, when once his reputation is made, can only remain faithful to the cause of Labor by repeatedly sacrificing his chance of worldly success ; and the workers have no right to demand such sacrifices, even if it were not folly to trust to their being made. For an able working man, on the contrary, a seat in Parliament is not a mere step to professional advancement, because he has no profession except that of serving his constituents, and no means except what he receives from them for his service. Besides, he regards his position as a promotion, and not as a condescension or a sacrifice. It would of course be idle to deny that the ablest working man who comes straight from the factory or mine into Parliament has a good deal to learn which the middle class employers who share the benches with him have learnt already from their experience in the management of commercial business ; but on the other hand a working man is more likely to learn business than a middle class man is to unlearn his class prejudices. To all of which it must be added that the effect on the public mind of the return of a working man to Parliament is far greater than that of the return of even the most advanced revolutionist from the ruling classes. The Fabian Society therefore, whilst urging the workers to get the best candidates they can without drawing any hard and fast line, strongly urges the selection of working men as candidates in all constituencies where there is an independent Labor party, the necessary precaution being taken, in all cases, of keeping the subscriptions under the control of a responsible committee, so that subscribers may be guaranteed as far as possible against candidates who ask for subscriptions and then withdraw, leaving the friends of Labor disgusted at the waste of their money. It is necessary to repeat here that an independent Labor party means a Labor organization so powerful as to be able to carry its candidates without Liberal or Conservative support. It does *not* mean merely a Society which is in favor of an independent Labor party, though such Societies may do good work in heckling candidates and keeping up the political pace, especially if two or more in the same constituency combine their forces for the election. Middle class candidates, however advanced, should be reserved for constituencies where the seat cannot be won without some middle class support. Nobody need have the slightest fear of seeing too many working men in the Parliament. It is only too certain that there will not be enough to satisfy even the most Conservative of Conservative working men.



## Always Vote, Labor Candidate or No Labor Candidate.

In cases where no Labor candidate can be run, there must be no hesitation on the part of the workers in securing the success of the best candidate in the field, or, if all the candidates are bad, in at least securing the defeat of the worst. The only thing that is quite certain to happen at the Election is the utter defeat of any unorganized section which sulks and declares that if it cannot have exactly the sort of candidate it wants it will not vote at all. Politicians who sulk generally excuse themselves by saying that if they were to support any candidate who did not accept their whole program, they would be "compromising their principles"; and such Pharisaic excuses are always popular in England, partly because we are too fond of cant of all kinds, and partly because but few of us have any practical knowledge of the working of the party system under our First Ballot method of election, or of the skill and generalship needed to fight political battles when the result of a General Election may cost the propertied classes millions by its effect on subsequent taxation. Every working man must try to get as much of the Labor program as he possibly can staked in his constituency at the election; but if he only succeeds in getting half-an-inch of it staked, he must vote and agitate for that half inch as resolutely as if it were the whole. The propertied classes are retreating before the laboring classes; but the retreat is not a rout: they are yielding step by step, and disputing every step with all their might. Every election in which a more progressive candidate defeats a less progressive or a reactionary one is a step gained; and the man who does not see that it is better worth while to gain a step than lose one is a hindrance instead of a help to the Labor side, however sincere his impatience may be. Every advantage is worth securing. The more advanced the Conservative party is, the more it will force the pace of the Liberal party. And if the Liberal party obtains a majority at the General Election, much will depend on the sort of men who compose that majority. If they are a flock of subservient Gladstonians to whom the Newcastle program is nothing but a trap to catch Working Class votes in, then the great disappointment of 1880 will be repeated; and we shall again find out how little there is to choose between Whig capitalists and Tory ones. If, on the contrary, they are stiffened by a sturdy contingent of Socialists and Radicals who thoroughly understand that Mr. Gladstone is a strong Conservative on every subject except Home Rule, some progress may be made in spite of his efforts to head them back. Before long, no doubt, the merging of the Liberal party, properly so called, with the Conservative party, will be completed. Mr. Goschen, Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Hartington have already followed John Bright into the Conservative camp; and they will be joined there before long by Sir William Harcourt, Mr. John Morley, Mr. Labouchere and other gentlemen who are now nearly as popular with the Radicals as Mr. Chamberlain was after his "ransom" speech at

the theatre in Waterloo Road in 1885, or John Bright at the Hyde Park demonstration against the House of Lords in 1884. Time has proved that the Socialists were right then in maintaining that these gentlemen belonged at heart to the great Capitalist party. That is Mr. Gladstone's party as much as it is Lord Salisbury's; Mr. Morley's as much as it is Mr. Balfour's; Sir William Harcourt's as much as it is Mr. Goschen's. Nothing is to be won for Labor by trusting to them; but something may be wrung from them whilst they are still divided, by playing on their rivalries to tempt them to outbid one another for the Labor vote, and by taking advantage of their self-complacent ignorance of the Labor Question to induce them to pass measures of which they do not understand the nature or foresee the consequences. At the same time they must be dealt with without any useless and inconsiderate bitterness. These gentlemen follow their class bias even to the extent of breaking all the party ties which have bound them in the past; and no reasonable opponent will reproach them for doing so. It is their fidelity to their own class which leads them to close up their ranks against the Working Class. It is easy to hound on discontented workers to rail at them for it. But the wise course is to follow their example on our own side. When Mr. Goschen had to choose between the interest of his class and his allegiance to Mr. Gladstone, he did not hesitate to throw over Mr. Gladstone. How soon are our older Radical leaders going to imitate Mr. Goschen's devotion?

### This is All.

This is all the Fabian Society, or any Society, can honestly say to the Working Classes on the forthcoming election. It amounts to little more than looking unpleasant facts in the face and considering how to make the best of them. The Society, like other Societies of the same kind, has done what it could during the term of the expiring parliament to make the facts pleasanter; but the little handfuls of men who are here and there devoting themselves to the political interests of Labor, cannot change the condition of fourteen million wage workers who will do practically nothing for themselves. Slavery is popular in England provided the wages are regular: Socialism is only applauded when its propagandists give free lectures, distribute free literature, and do other people's political drudgery for nothing. The average British working man is a political pauper: he will neither do his own political work, nor pay anyone else to do it for him; and the result is that he is also an economic pauper, the mere tool and drudge of a class which leaves no stone unturned, and spares no expense, to secure the control of the State for itself. During the next few months the working man will be flattered and courted by politicians of all sorts; and when he has given his vote to the candidate whose flatteries please him best, and who will be careful to denounce our plain speaking as "an insult to the Working Classes of this country," he will, if the present depression of trade continues, soon find himself out on strike against a reduction of wage,

and striking in vain in the face of a falling market. After that, he will be lucky if he does not find himself one of the unemployed, with no wages to strike about, high or low. Then he will learn, as he did in 1886 and 1887, that the remedy of his flatterers in parliament for starvation caused by want of employment is the policeman's bludgeon and the Mansion House Charitable Fund, in alternate doses. Under our commercial system, Trade progresses by alternate expansions and contractions. The capitalist must have "a reserve army" of unemployed always to take men from as trade expands, and to fling them back into as it contracts. Each wave, counting from one commercial crisis to the next, takes usually about ten years to complete itself. That means that five years of rising wages, accompanied by successful strikes and the formation of new Trade Unions in all directions, is followed by five years of falling wages, unsuccessful strikes, the bankruptcy and break-up of the mushroom Unions of the period of prosperity, and finally the multiplication of the unemployed and a terrible spell of hard times. Our last period of prosperity, it will be remembered, began at the end of 1887. It is nearly five years since then; and the tide is already turning. The hard times are coming back again. If the workers take some trouble to improve the House of Commons at this election, it may, when the distress comes, set the Local Government Board to work to stir up the Boards of Guardians and other local bodies to meet the emergency by employing labor on those public improvements for which there is no commercial demand, although they are needed everywhere for the general convenience. But if the workers leave the House of Commons as it is, they must put up, when the bad time comes, with the pawnbroker, the stoneyard, the bludgeon, and the beggar's dole. For the unemployed cannot be helped at the expense of the ordinary ratepayer, but by special taxation of the rich; and no House of Commons in which Labor is not strongly represented will touch the incomes of the rich.

It would be idle to add another word. If the sting of present poverty, with the dread of worse poverty in the near future and the recollection of it in the near past cannot rouse the workers to action, print and paper cannot do it. Freedom will cost a struggle and sacrifice which, though too hard for a few to sustain, will be light enough for each when all are ready and willing to share it. The workers know this already: it remains now for them to act upon it.





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